REMARKS

By this Amendment, Applicants have amended the claims to eliminate the indefiniteness problems noted by the Examiner on page 2 and the top of page 3 of the Office Action. Applicants have also changed the spelling of "vapour" to the more common U.S. spelling of "vapor" as suggested by the Examiner.

In view of the foregoing amendments to the claims, it is submitted all of the claims now in the application apply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 2, 7, 12 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, and of the objection to claims 1-13 at the top of page 3 of the Office Action are requested.

Claims 1-6 and 8-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,444,095 to Evans et al. Applicants traverse this rejection and request reconsideration thereof.

The present invention relates to a method for regenerating a glycol solution containing water, hydrocarbons and dissolved salts. The method comprises the following stages:

a) expanding the solution so as to release hydrocarbons and to obtain a hydrocarbon-poor solution,

b) distilling in a distillation column the hydrocarbon-poor solution obtained in stage a) to obtain a glycol-enriched solution and a vapor comprising water and hydrocarbons,

c) placing under vacuum a first part of the glycol-enriched solution obtained in stage b) under a pressure below 90,000 Pa abs. to obtain vaporized water and a glycol solution comprising precipitated salts, and

d) separating the precipitated salts from the glycol solution obtained in stage c) to obtain precipitated salts and a salt-depleted glycol solution.

The Evans et al. patent relates to a process and system for recovering glycol from glycol and bromine mixtures produced from oil or natural gas wells. The process utilizes the system to remove salt and other solids as well as excess water leaving a glycol stream that can be reused as a hydrate inhibitor. The process begins by preheating a glycol/brine stream comprising approximately fifty percent (50%) glycol. The stream is then subjected to three evaporation cycles. The first evaporation cycle comprises introducing the preheated stream into a suppressed boiling point evaporator where the stream is heated under a constant pressure. The stream pressure is then dropped to cause a portion of the water contained in the stream to vaporize or flash. The flashing stream is then introduced into a separator vessel where the water vapor is separated from the remaining liquid stream. The water vapor is removed from the separator and condensed. The remaining liquid glycol/brine stream is then pumped from the separator vessel through a solids removal system where precipitated salts and solids are removed. These steps are repeated two additional times. Each time the remaining liquid stream becomes more concentrated with glycol until the finished product is approximately ninety percent (90%) glycol.

The Examiner states that the process of Evans differs from the claimed invention in that the Examiner apparently deems the Evans et al. patent to not disclose the step c) recited in Applicants' claim 1. However, the Examiner ignores the other differences between the presently claimed invention and the process described in Evans et al. According to Evans et al. water is separated from the glycol mixture by heating and expansion of the mixture, whereas, according to the

present invention, the mixture is distilled.

The Evans et al. patent does not contain any suggestion to distillate the mixture of glycol and water. Further, according to the present invention, only a faction of the distillated solution of glycol is placed under the vacuum, then subjected to a separation steps for eliminating the precipitated salt. The precipitated salt eliminated from a fraction of solution of glycol allows t o reduce the concentration of salt in the glycol in order to perform a distillation at atmospheric pressure mixture of brine and glycol, according to the process of Evans et al., the whole stream of expanded mixture must be subjected to the solid removal system 60, 90 or 110 in order to eliminate the precipitated salt. Therefore, Evans et al. would not have suggested placing a faction of the mixture under vacuum.

For the foregoing reasons, the Evans et al. patent does not disclose and would not have suggested the presently claimed invention.

Applicants note the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 7, 12 and 13. However, in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is submitted all of the claims now in the application are in condition for allowance.

Applicants note the Examiner has cited a number of documents as being pertinent to Applicants' disclosure. However, since these documents were not applied in rejecting claims formerly in the application, further discussion of these documents is deemed unnecessary.

Please charge any shortage in the fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to the deposit account of Antonelli, Terry,

Stout & Kraus Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Case: 612.43222X00), and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

ANTONELLI, TERRY, STOUT & KRAUS, LLP

Alan E. Schiavelli
Registration No. 32,087

AES/at
(703) 312-6600